

Redundancy Support for Over 50s

A guide for union reps
engaging with both
employers and with
members over 50
who are experiencing
redundancy

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The Centre for Ageing Better is a charitable foundation focused on tackling inequalities in ageing. We are working to make our workplaces, homes and communities inclusive of older people, as well as building an Age-friendly Movement so that society sees ageing in a more positive and realistic way.

Our Work team is focused on how we ensure equitable access to work and training for people in their 50s, 60s and beyond. We want workplaces and jobs to be accessible for people over 50, and training and support to be more effective for this group.

Unionlearn is the learning and skills organisation of the TUC, assisting unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members. Unionlearn was established in 2006 by the TUC in order to provide an ongoing framework to support union led learning in England.

In the context of redundancy, unionlearn plays a critical role in supporting workers who are facing job losses or changes in their employment status. This includes support and advice to our members facing redundancy, retraining and reskilling opportunities, transition support and working alongside our reps to negotiate better redundancy terms.

Contents

Designed as a whole document that proceeds in order, you can also navigate to the sections which are of most interest and can also stand alone. There are tips, guidance and case studies included throughout.

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Purpose

This resource is designed to provide **union reps** with an overview of **redundancy** and of the differing levels of support that people aged over 50 may need. It aims to equip reps with the evidence, skills and tools to encourage HR colleagues and management to consider the needs of the older workforce when making redundancies.

We want to ensure that workplaces (and reps) adequately support workers in their 50s and 60s through the redundancy/restructure process. That through this support, workers are able to make informed decisions, are aware of their options and feel supported to progress appropriately after redundancy.

1. Foreword

Centre for Ageing Better

Redundancy has a huge impact on people of all ages, however, those over 50 are twice as likely to struggle to find a new job after being made redundant than younger colleagues.

The shock of redundancy can be particularly difficult to process for those who had planned to carry on working with a particular employer until retirement. People may also not have had to look for work for many years and can feel anxious about how to go about looking for new work or having to retrain later on in their careers. Employment support and employer in-house support offers often aren't effective for this group, not being designed with them in mind and failing to provide support at the right level. Add to this, the prevalence of age discrimination in

recruitment, and those who find themselves looking for work after redundancy at a later stage of life may well need additional tailored support to find the right next steps for them.

In 2021, the Centre for Ageing Better (with funding from Barclays Lifeskills), commissioned research into effective support to help people aged 50 to state-pension-age find fulfilling work after redundancy. This work included a two-year phase of research and co-design with people over 50 going through redundancy, and a 12-month pilot to test our insights. The learning from this and from those who have shared their experiences with us, form the basis of this document. We want to support those of you who are often the ones people come to first, to

better understand the unique impact this has on individuals at different stages in life, and to confidently be able to raise the issue of age-appropriate redundancy support within organisations. Redundancy support is needed at all ages, and the specific 50+ targeted recommendations in this document should not replace a wider outplacement support offer. What we hope is that the content here and the relevant resources linked throughout will ensure that you can support your members and employers effectively through the redundancy process, allowing for the best outcomes for your members.

Elaine Smith

Senior Programme Manager,
Centre for Ageing Better



Unionlearn Foreword

These are tough times for working people and their families, with workers' jobs and ultimately their livelihoods at risk. During these difficult times, it can be hard for workers to know where to go for independent advice and support. Facing redundancy can be a challenging experience for anyone, but for individuals over 50, it can feel particularly daunting. The prospect of losing a job, coupled with the uncertainty of the future, can bring a range of emotions from confusion and frustration to fear and self-doubt.

Trade unions and union reps can be key in helping our members gain fairness at work. This guide is specifically designed to assist you in supporting individuals aged 50 and beyond as they navigate the difficult journey

of redundancy. This guide will help you support members at every stage of the redundancy process, including helping them access the knowledge, training, and skills they need to move forward afterwards. While redundancy may feel like the end of one chapter, it is also an opportunity to begin a new one; one that reflects your members' experience, wisdom, and personal aspirations.

Trade unions are here to help. We support workers through thick and thin. And keeping people in work is our number one priority.

unionlearn
from the TUC

2. Context

Thousands of jobs are being lost to redundancy across the UK. Jobs in manufacturing, aviation, oil and gas, hospitality, leisure, entertainment and retail are among those under immediate threat, but jobs could be at risk in just about every sector of the economy. These are really tough times for working people and their families, times that are further impacted by challenges and practical barriers faced by people in their 50s and over. People over 50 are more likely to become long-term unemployed after falling out of work, and workers made redundant over 50 are three times less likely to return to work within three months than those younger than them. Traditional employment support has not served people in their 50s and 60s as well as those in younger age groups. Often those who want, or need to work, don't have access to the necessary support to help

them find and sustain good employment.

Change in the workplace, such as restructuring, redeployment or redundancy, may make people rethink what they want to do in the future and what kind of support they may need in managing that change. The personal impact means many may also feel at a loss about next steps or be unwilling to look for help. This guide provides information and advice to help you communicate information around redundancy clearly, and to support members at every stage of the redundancy process including helping them access the knowledge and skills they need to move forwards.

This guide also focuses on how to work with organisations to ensure that fair and appropriate processes are put in place for people of all ages. The law

requires employers to consult properly and act fairly and without discrimination whenever they make staff redundant. The Equality Act also means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics, including age, is now against the law in almost all cases. No matter how urgent or dire the economic challenges they are facing, employers that break the law can be made to face legal penalties.

Trade unions are here to help workers through thick and thin, with their number one priority being to keep people in work. Unionlearn and Centre for Ageing Better have collaborated to produce this guide which provides practical advice and support you need to ensure that workplaces and union reps, adequately support older workers through the redundancy/

restructure process. Through this support, workers are able to make informed decisions, are aware of their options and feel supported to progress appropriately after redundancy.

For those interested in finding out more about Centre for Ageing Better's work on redundancy, visit [Redundancy support project | Centre for Ageing Better](#)



3. What is redundancy?

Redundancies happen when an employer needs to reduce their workforce. Redundancy dismissals happen when an employee loses their job through no fault of their own. Here are some examples of genuine redundancy situations:

- Economic pressures have forced an employer to close some retail outlets and jobs are lost
- An employer relocates to a new site
- An employer introduces more efficient technology, removing the need for some jobs and creating new ones
- A large order is lost, leading to a fall in work
- One business buys another, leading to duplication of roles in the new business

There can be a redundancy dismissal even if someone's job still exists but has been given to another employee whose own job was eliminated, as long as overall the employer needs fewer employees.

If there are to be redundancies, they may be on a voluntary basis or be compulsory. For those offered voluntary redundancy, this will usually come with a 'package' of pay and benefits. People should check that this includes at least the minimum statutory redundancy pay. It will also be important that they make sure it is the right package for them and they should take advice before accepting it. As a rep, you should be able to provide advice to union members. Compulsory redundancy is when people have no choice. However, they do still have rights, including the right to be consulted.

A consultation is when the employer talks to employees about the changes they are planning and why each role is at risk of redundancy. This should include a personal meeting with each employee where they can also ask questions and suggest changes. The employer does not have to make the changes suggested, but they do need to show that they've listened to staff and tried to come to an agreement.

By law, employers must hold collective consultation where all of the following apply:

- They're proposing 20 or more redundancies
- The redundancies are in one establishment – not necessarily in the organisation as a whole, which may be much larger
- They propose to make the redundancies within 90 days

If fewer than 20 employees are to be made redundant then the employer only must consult with staff individually.

Only 'employees' have redundancy rights. This includes employees on a fixed-term or part time employment contract and apprentices. Neither 'workers' nor the genuinely self-employed have redundancy rights. Temporary agency workers don't have redundancy rights – unless they are direct employees of the employment agency or business they work for. Employees who are dismissed for redundancy after working for two full years are entitled to a statutory redundancy payment.

Employers can make errors when calculating weekly pay and notice pay, and employees should get advice on calculations. Weekly pay is the average earned per week over the 12 weeks before the day you got your redundancy notice.

Age impacts on statutory redundancy payments; individuals are entitled to one and half week's pay for each full year they worked aged 41 or older. Length of service is capped at 20 years.

They will lose this right if they unreasonably refuse an offer of suitable alternative employment. There is a short trial period (four calendar weeks) to try out the alternative role. Staying in the new role beyond the trial period is likely to mean the statutory redundancy payment is lost.

Redundancy dismissal notice

Once consultation has ended, the employer can issue redundancy dismissal notices. The redundancy notice must include a written statement explaining how the redundancy payment has been calculated ([ERA section 165](#)).

An employee who has worked for their employer for at least two years and has been given notice of dismissal for redundancy has a legal right to reasonable paid time off during working hours to look for another job, for example to attend interviews, capped at 40 percent of a week's pay. Unions may be able to negotiate better rights than this.

An employee dismissed for redundancy must be paid a statutory redundancy payment if they have worked for their employer for at least two years, and they have not unreasonably refused an offer of suitable alternative employment.

Employees who have worked more than two years for an employer are entitled to take up to 40% of their normal working week off to find, apply and train for a new job. reps should ask the employer to extend that right to all employees, not just those with two years' service.

From the beginning, tell members to keep a dated record of any conversation or correspondence they have about their job or redundancy, just in case you need to plan an appeal. Make sure they get any verbal offers from employers in writing so they can produce evidence if needed.

If people think they were selected unfairly or there was a problem in the redundancy process, then the employer

should offer them the chance to appeal.

For further information on how to appeal, go to <https://www.acas.org.uk/your-rights-during-redundancy/appeal-a-redundancy-decision>

Speak to members as soon as possible to find out what they want you to negotiate for and what action they might take in support. Consultation periods are short, so you'll need to act fast.

Book in regular meetings with members throughout the consultation period to keep up to date and share anything new – remember what they want, what they need and what they might get will change, so keep in touch.

As a rep, your role is to:

- stay connected to members and their needs
- inform and prepare yourself well to represent them
- support and protect members' interests in consultation
- hold employers to account and see they meet their obligations
- remind members of their rights
- help negotiate the best possible outcome for members and discuss alternatives
- challenge unfairness or bad practice, and raise concerns with the employer
- seek guidance from your union officer when more support or information is needed



4. The importance of interventions for over 50s

There has been an increase in the number of people over 50 withdrawing from the workforce, citing various reasons such as health constraints, caregiving responsibilities and a lack of suitable employment. The pandemic exacerbated this issue, with statistics showing that a third of individuals made redundant during this time were aged over 50. There are also large inequalities in terms of who leaves the labour market and how, with those on lower incomes more likely to face greater challenges.

We know that multi-generational workforces drive productivity and innovation but despite this, many older people face barriers that make it difficult to remain in work. People aged 50 and over, are twice as likely to struggle to find a new job if they're made redundant and they

often face age discrimination in recruitment. If people have heard of employment support services, they generally see them as 'not for me'. This is largely due to support and training currently being targeted towards those with little to no experience, or groups that aren't aged over 50.

For people who are being made redundant from life-long or long-term jobs, redundancy can come as a shock and a blow to their self-esteem. Many haven't had to apply for a job for many years and feel unsure about the value of retraining later in their careers. For people in their 50s and 60s who didn't expect to change jobs before retirement, the shock of redundancy can have a huge impact on identity, plans for the future and mindset – making it hard to engage with the support available.

This means that you will likely need to reframe the conversations you're having to ensure that employers offer appropriate support and that members feel comfortable both asking for it and engaging with it.

What are over 50s worried about?

Perceived inadequacies can prevent some people over 50 from proactively searching for or engaging in work-based progress activities. Areas of concern might include:

- gaps in their CV
- no longer in possession of relevant qualifications
- the need to upskill
- inadequate IT or technical skills
- wouldn't fit into a contemporary work culture
- practical barriers

There may also be concerns about how employers will perceive their work availability and needs because of their age. For example:

- Employers will want them to work varied hours all the time which might not work for people, particularly if caring or managing health issues
- Concerns that they might place demands upon employers
- Beliefs that employers prefer younger workers who cost less to employ and have fewer commitments
- They don't want to be seen to let employers or colleagues down
- A reluctance to ask for help / disclose issues in case this is perceived badly

5. What support should an employer provide?

Employers often source outplacement support (also known as career transition services) for those being made redundant. This is an optional service provided by employers, typically through specialist firms, to support employees transitioning out of the organisation. Ideally, the aim of these services is to help individuals secure new employment as quickly as possible, while also providing tailored emotional and practical support during a challenging time.

There is no legal requirement for this service and the onus is usually on the employee to contact the provider once details have been provided by the employer. Usually, services will include coaching and job search support. However, outplacement services do not source jobs or place former employees in them.

If no outplacement is being sought, then ideally employers should look to provide their own packages of support. Good packages of employer support should cover:

- group coaching, with a professional coach to lead sessions and support with identifying transferable skills
 - time and space for staff to process the shock and anger of redundancy
 - professional CV writing for staff
 - connections to support services such as government funded employment and training programmes or local job search groups – setting out details of what is available and any eligibility requirements
- tailored job search support, including advice on CVs, application processes, job search techniques, an understanding of algorithms and how to work with them, networking and mock interviews
 - unbiased financial advice/ guidance – pensions/ benefits (impartial regulated advice)



6. Group coaching

In 2021, the Centre for Ageing Better commissioned research into effective support to help people aged 50 to state-pension-age find fulfilling work after redundancy. Ageing Better, in partnership with Shift Design, spent two years engaging with key stakeholders and with people over 50 who had recently been made redundant to look at what people were experiencing and how they could be better supported throughout the process. The outcome of this work was a group coaching model which was tested in the West Midlands, firstly with a live redundancy at GKN Automotive, then as a 12-month pilot by FareShare Midlands. Due to the local labour market, the initial target was people in the manufacturing and automotive industries who were at risk of redundancy, however this was extended to cover people from all sectors.

We found that by taking a coaching approach, participants were able to build their confidence around applying for jobs and had the space and support they needed to explore possible job options. Recognising the devastating emotional impact redundancy can have on individuals, the course centred on group coaching, with peer groups working to support each other through the process alongside a professional coach.

One participant explained:

‘When I went on the course, I was a bit low, really, because I didn’t know what to do. But they gave me confidence to build a CV. They brought out my skills that I didn’t know I had, transferable skills.’

The Ageing Better model is delivered over three days (two together and one around a week later) and covers:

- Relationship-building activities: exploring participants' experiences of and feelings about being made redundant, their backgrounds, and what they wanted to do next – including whether these aspirations were likely to be realistic
- Discussing strengths and skills: including identifying transferable skills and generating the information required for CV writing
- Exploration of job seeking and training options: including digital skills support and developing interview skills, including practice/role play

For employers interested in delivering this model, [Ageing Better](#) can be contacted to arrange for staff training to deliver sessions to staff aged 50 and over.

If you struggle to get buy in from HR leads, then it is possible to deliver a more informal version of this group coaching model yourself. You can create space for peer sessions and practical skill development. This is explored in more detail in section 7 – ‘What can you do?’.



Case studies

GKN Automotive is a multinational manufacturer of driveline components, all-wheel drive systems and eDrive systems for the automotive industry. In 2022, GKN Automotive tested an over 50s redundancy group coaching model developed by Centre for Ageing Better.

Frank Duffy had been an employee of GKN Automotive for 34 years. Working for a company that charts its history from 1759 with development and innovation sustaining it to the present day, Frank and his colleagues had no indication that their jobs were at risk when the company restructured in 2022. But he, along with colleagues, many of whom had worked for the company for 20-30 years, found they were suddenly facing redundancy.

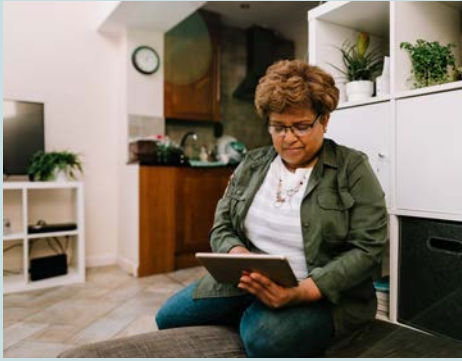
Alison Hughes worked as the HR Lead for GKN Automotive and her agreement to test the group coaching model was instrumental in providing positive outcomes for older employees.

Here are their stories:

At that time Frank was the convener for Unite. He explained that on learning of the redundancies, he initially felt a little bit numb and then shocked, 'It wasn't something that we thought was on the cards at the time.' Frank learnt of the group coaching scheme and its emphasis on the needs of older workers through his contact with the TUC. He explained:

'Nowadays, when you've got people that have worked in the same job for 20/30 plus years, how you go about finding work had completely changed from the last time they'd looked at finding work... I mean, back in my day... when I was looking for jobs it was the local evening paper and the job centre. But obviously that's not where you find jobs nowadays, it's all done online.'

Frank recognised the potential value of a redundancy support course that was targeted at these older workers who wouldn't necessarily know how to go about finding a job.



As convener, Frank approached Alison, the HR Lead and suggested they test the redundancy support prototype. Initially Alison was hesitant, having already commissioned outplacement services. Frank explained:

‘I persuaded Alison that potentially this group of people probably needed a bit more support in finding work than they were going to get through [the outplacement service] and the courses that they were running... [Alison] was also reticent to just target one particular group because she felt that wouldn’t be particularly fair. But I persuaded her that ultimately this group needed more support and help in finding work potentially, than people of a younger generation who would understand better

how to go out and find jobs, and what they needed to do to put themselves in the best position to find a job.

So yeah, it was a case of talking her round, and she accepted potentially that that age group probably would need a bit more focus than the younger generation who have potentially had new jobs and know what the process is and where to look and what’s required CV wise and all the rest of it.’

Once Alison had agreed to test the redundancy support prototype, Frank’s next mission was to recruit as many people as possible onto the course. As the union rep, Frank felt that his participation in the course played a part in encouraging others to attend, because they trusted him.



'Well, I spoke to as many people as possible that I knew were in that age group that I knew had got concerns about what they were going to do next and how they would go about it, just through general conversations with them. A lot of them were keen to do it, but were obviously nervous because they didn't know what to expect... which is why I initially then said that I'd do it with them because I said, look - if I go on it, are you happy to join then because at least ultimately then I'm setting an example. So, it was a case of talking them round because a lot of people of that age group are very wary about anything done on laptops or on computers... there was one guy on there that hadn't even used a smartphone at that point, he'd just got a very old fashioned phone that he just about sent text messages on, so that was his knowledge.



But at the end of it, he was doing his CVs and was looking online and looking at job adverts and all the rest of it. And that individual actually has ended up in a really good job afterwards because of what he learnt. [He] ended up getting a really good job in an aerospace company.

So, he was really glad that he'd done it because ultimately, he said that's what got him that job, because he knew where to look and how to go about doing it.'

In terms of course content and new learning, Frank also benefitted personally from participating:

‘I felt a lot more confident, because at that point I didn’t know what I was going to do, hadn’t made-up my mind in any way, shape or form. I was even considering maybe semi-retirement, maybe just doing a bit of part time work. So, I’d really made no decisions prior to that course and actually after doing it, I thought I’ve now got the skills and knowledge – it put my mind at rest. I thought, well, if I make the decision I’m going to carry on working full time, at least I know now how to go about doing it and the best way of doing it. So, it gave me that confidence.’



In fact, Frank’s career path took a significant turn, moving away from the automotive industry and accepting an invitation to apply to cover a role with the TUC, although as Frank explained:

‘It was a bit of a natural progression really because I’ve been looking after people as a shop steward and as the convener for over 20 odd years. So, it was something that’s that was in my blood and I love doing it’.

Frank was then invited again, to apply for a new role with the TUC looking at the transition of the automotive industry and how to get involved with the union reps coming up with their own worker-led plans. After 12 months in that role, he was then approached by Unite the Union who were advertising full-time positions, and is currently working as West Midlands Regional Officer.



Alison explained the experience from an HR perspective:

‘In partnership with Unite, I was asked if my site wanted to take part in the first group coaching prototype being run by Ageing Better who were investigating specific areas of support that the over 50s might need as they re-enter the job market after redundancy. Having commissioned a significant and targeted outplacement programme providing job search support to those facing redundancy, I was initially reluctant to agree as I was concerned about duplication of services. But, with the progress that has been made since, I can say I am truly very glad that we participated – and would recommend this process to anyone.

‘As soon as the first session kicked off, what struck me was how emotional my teams still were about the closure news. This was an announcement that had been made at least 15 months earlier, and yet

it was clear that they had not reconciled themselves to a closure. They were all seeking a forum to share, discuss and “mourn” the closure news – something that I had not recognised. In hindsight, I now question the applicability of a formal outplacement programme when the very basic need of listening to the team’s reaction to the closure had not been met. I do think there is a point at which employees need to be lifted out of the “valley of doom” and encouraged to look forward, and the trainer engaged by Ageing Better managed this supportively and empathetically when it had clearly been missed by myself and the outplacement provider.



‘Almost a third of the workforce had over 20 years of continuous service – and a cohort into 30 and 40 years’ service respectively. GKN had been a constant in their lives. The attendees on the prototype were all exceptionally negative about the likelihood of them gaining full time, meaningful, well-paid work after their time at GKN. They all believed that they would be viewed by future organisations as too old; that they would be competing against a younger generation who were better equipped and that they would be able to articulate any potential transferable skills. I was shocked at what little aspiration they had for the future, and especially how that translated into anything above minimum wage – which is what they believed they would secure financially.



‘Over the course of the four-week programme, confidence grew significantly across the cohort. The style and skills of the trainer are key to making this happen – and in this case there was substantial ground covered in what was really a very short space of time.

Several members of the cohort had no email address and relied on their children to do this for them. One of the sessions focused on this and all of them came away having understood – and gained – their own personal email address.

Learning that some recruitment tools now mean a CV is virtually reviewed was surprising for all the team, but once they had grasped the need for adaptability in content of their CV and to make sure that they were “hitting” key words, they actually became very adept at this. Peer-to-peer support in the classroom environment was actively encouraged, and the participants helped and motivated each other to identify the transferable skills that they undoubtedly have.



‘As a senior HR professional, I am used to commissioning outplacement-type support and training – and there are elements of crossover here. But I am convinced that this model of focus on the over 50s is offering something different and very tangible – a strong sense that “we are in it together”, a forum for experienced employees to work through their concerns and anxieties, provide targeted support, guidance in areas which younger employees take for granted such as applying online, and improving overall motivation and confidence in engaging with an external market environment.

‘I am grateful to all concerned who helped deliver this prototype – and proud that we were able to play our part in potentially shaping something for the future.’

7. What can you do?

Focus on confidence and emotional support

Confidence is one of the most consistent barriers to job hunting we've heard from over 50s. That's confidence in their skills, confidence in their value as a potential new employee (especially in comparison with younger people), and confidence in their ability to present themselves effectively in the recruitment process. Draw out and talk about skills and strengths, build confidence in the value of their years of experience.

Facilitated groups give space to gently challenge and work through any negative mindsets, focusing instead on goals and aspirations outside of work. These might not seem priorities to people at the time, but thinking holistically will help people to focus on what is important to them and what steps could be taken to work towards their goals. As a Rep you're in a unique position to

recruit people to peer groups, promoting the benefits and helping to facilitate sessions.

'It's frustrating. I want to do something and know what my life is going to be like after this. I don't really know what is going on.'

Gavin, jobseeker

The framing of support can be crucial to success. People will all respond differently to redundancy, but following some basic approaches will help people to navigate it as best they can.

Use positive and supportive messaging

What makes good messaging around redundancy?

- A positive experience. People can be wary of walking into Job Centres or employment and training services – think about their experience of walking in, what changes can you make to improve this?
- People like you. Highlight that they are not the only one going through this and that there are others who ‘get it’ and can provide support
- Age isn’t an emphasis. We can recognise age and any specific needs people may have without making people feel bad about their age
- Keep it practical and focused on needs. Explain how the offer is tailored to their needs and circumstances
- Positive and opportunity led. Talk about strengths, next steps and potential
- Acknowledge wider life circumstances, including responsibilities outside of looking for work
- Clearly explain signposting – how is this course relevant, how does it link to their goals

- Experienced not experts. Coaches with experience in finding jobs, not expert in all jobs. Use the experience and talent of your colleagues

Champion peer support

Peer support is a great way to help people to support each other through the process. Ideally this should happen alongside a professional coaching process, but it can be a successful standalone intervention. We would strongly recommend that you work with the HR team of the employer to arrange for an external coach/facilitator to run these sessions. If you do decide to run sessions yourself, find a co-facilitator to help you handle the group dynamics and ensure that the focus remains on finding a positive way forward. The aim is to create space for people in similar circumstances to share their frustrations but mainly their hopes for next steps. This can be as part of one-off sessions, but ideally you want to create a trusted group environment – people are far

more likely to engage with those they already know and with sessions recommended by colleagues they trust.

Groups allow people to process the shock of redundancy and to talk about what it feels like at the later stages of their working lives. Relationships are at the core of working lives and job hunting. Daily contact with peers at work is an important part of social life for many people aged over 50. When redundancy happens people can be left suddenly feeling alone. Often contact with former colleagues is lost or, in the case of settlements, they are unable to speak about their experiences. We know that tapping into social support, either informal or formal, can help both with wellbeing through sharing stories and feeling someone is rooting for you, and with accessing work via personal networks - which is one of the most common sources of new jobs.

Peer support groups should be facilitated to ensure that they ultimately remain focused on future planning and positive next steps for people.

They need space to express any anger, but in order to get the most benefit this needs to be accompanied by some time for thinking about ‘what next?’. When facilitating these sessions, make sure to set some ground rules about how people contribute (for example, not talking over people or belittling others’ emotions). But facilitation doesn’t mean this has to be an overly structured approach – think about what people in your organisation are most likely to respond well to and tailor support options appropriately. Would face-to-face work best, how about a group chat to encourage ongoing contact?

‘We set up a WhatsApp group “JLR old gits” and “SVO rejects” to share opportunities. I also joined LinkedIn group for ex JLR.’

Mick, jobseeker

Help people to think about reskilling

People often have an idea of the job or type of work they want, even if they're not quite sure what their options are or how to get there yet. People over 50 are much less likely to have been offered on the job training, and less likely to have taken up any offers they have received. This can mean that many haven't engaged in any formal training or upskilling for a long time, and as a result lack confidence in starting something new now. They may need support in knowing where to find out about training available, funding options and what to expect from courses. You will not have all of the answers, but identifying local training organisations and getting the employer to link in with these is a good starting point.

'I'm left wondering if it's worth it to reskill because of my age.'

Stuart, jobseeker

Employer support for learning and training is a key part of the collective consultation process. [TULRCA section 188](#) says employers must consult collectively on ways of "mitigating the effects" of redundancies.

Reskilling is vital for members because it boosts their chances of getting another job by improving their skills, qualifications and employability. It is also good for employers because it improves the morale of staff left behind, to see their coworkers treated fairly. Boosting retention and attendance also cuts the cost of agency staff. It is also important for your union, because members value the work the union does to help them retrain to move forward. They are more likely to stay union members, or to rejoin in their new role.

Suggest to members that they make a list of their skills – and not just the ones they use at work, but other skills from home and personal life. This will help when it comes to identifying jobs that might fit and preparing their CV and application.

A negotiated learning package should enable staff to access affordable learning of a high enough standard to help them gain the skills and qualifications they need to find another job. Ideally, retraining packages should allow members time off, for example to access:

- qualified information, advice and guidance (IAG) from an expert provider, such as the [National Careers Service](#)
- training in English and maths by a qualified person, if needed
- digital skills training
- training on CV writing, completing an online job application, letter writing, interviews (virtual and face to face) and job search techniques
- local reskilling courses, where available
- support and advice on financial information and budgeting
- one-to-one advice sessions with a Union learning reps (ULR)

- advice from Jobcentre Plus on how to access benefits such as universal credit

ULRs need enough facility time to play their role in connection with the planned redundancies, which will involve surveying learning needs, discussions with members, liaising with the employer and consulting with learning providers. How much time is needed will depend on how many ULRs are in place and how many redundancies are planned. There may already be a learning agreement in place to draw on. In a workplace with a recognised union, ULRs have a legal right to a reasonable amount of time off to carry out their duties ([TULRCA section 168A](#); [Employment Act 2002 section 43](#)). These duties include addressing learning or training needs, providing information and advice, promoting the value of learning, preparing, and consulting with the employer. ULRs also have a right to paid time off for training. There is information in paras [16–17 of the Acas Code of Practice Time off for Trade Union Duties](#). Existing ULRs should get involved in the redundancy

consultation process as early as possible. There should be enough ULRs to cover all shifts and workplaces. With a large-scale redundancy, reskilling and employability activities should ideally be coordinated through a joint committee, bringing together management and union reps. This means union reps can ensure they are involved in all aspects of the redundancy consultation process and that reskilling is given the focus it deserves. The committee should be chaired by a senior manager, which demonstrates buy-in and will be implemented without delay. Each site where redundancies are taking place should have a named person to coordinate learning activity and there should be regular progress reports.

Work on practical job search skills

We know current recruitment practices and ways of looking for work can be unfamiliar and intimidating for people in their 50s and 60s who haven't had to job hunt possibly for decades. Providing practical

support like explaining how recruitment works, getting job sites up on screen and doing demos, showing how to filter job sites to shortlist opportunities, spending time on basic computer skills in groups and one-to-one, typing and exporting CVs together, are all practical steps that employers should be ensuring are offered by outplacement support. It makes job hunting less intimidating by building knowledge of current recruitment practices, knowing what makes a good CV and interview, getting to work on and roleplay these in a safe and supportive space and providing tools for self-practice with family and friends.

It's also important to remind people that if they have worked for an organisation continuously for two years or more, including the notice period, then their employers must allow them a reasonable amount of time off during their redundancy notice period to look for another job or to do training. This can have pay implications for individuals though so members should

check how much time can be taken paid when considering this.

You have rights as a Rep too. As long as you're known to your employer as the elected Rep of your union, you can expect:

- 'facility time' – paid time-off from your usual work to carry out your duties as a Rep
- courses and training to act as a Rep
- protection from discrimination – you cannot be discriminated against by your employer in redundancy consultations for acting as a Rep
- support from your union officer, union and the TUC

Unfortunately, many older jobseekers will face ageism during the recruitment process. You can help prepare people for the potential for this to happen by discussing ways to cope with it, tips to navigate it, and by providing a space to process the impact this may have. This could involve preparing them to speak about their experience in a positive way, directing them to websites offering specific

support for people over 50 (for example, [Rest Less](#) or [Careers Can Change](#)), or simply giving them time to share issues faced and support in raising any complaints linked to these. It takes a lot of resilience to keep going when it feels like you aren't getting anywhere, but here are some tips we've heard from people who have been successful:

- Look out for employers that show a commitment to being an age-friendly workplace – do they have flexible recruitment practices, actively discuss their age friendly workforce, provide holistic "MOTs" to staff in mid-life and beyond. You can also check which employers have signed up to the [Centre for Ageing Better's Age-friendly Employer Pledge](#). More than 450 employers have already signed up to the Pledge and all [company names](#) can be found on the website.
- Suggest a skills-based section on CVs. Highlighting key milestone moments out of the traditional chronological experience

format can really help. Ask people to put forward experiences throughout life, work, home and volunteering. People often have many transferable skills that mean they bring a unique set of expertise and potential to any job.

- Many job interviews are competency based now, encourage people not to just focus on the most recent role they had. If people have a great example to answer a question they don't have to say when it happened, just what it was.
- Ask for the interview questions in advance if they don't provide them automatically, so there's time to really dig into what they are looking for, they often ask about skills and experience not already covered in the application.
- A job interview is also about finding out if the employer is a right fit for the individual. If they are displaying ageist attitudes in the recruitment process, then they may not be the best place to work.

Signpost to financial support and planning

Financial support and planning are particularly important for older jobseekers who may have assumed they could keep working up to pension age. Statutory employment support doesn't kick in until people are out of work for three months. We know that people in their 50s and 60s typically don't access this support until after employment has ended and they're feeling stuck without work. They often say, "I'll take some time off and look for work after my contract or payout ends" and can panic when they can't find a job or feel forced to take a lower salary or a zero-hours contract. There can also be a stigma attached to services, which are seen as for people who don't work or not for people who've had long work histories like them.

Others 'fall through the gaps' in accessing support due to ineligibility from informal redundancies or not being financial support recipients.

‘It’s weighing on my mind that I would have only have to had worked a few years till my pension, now I don’t have a plan!’

Stuart, jobseeker

You are not expected to fully understand the complex landscape of benefits systems, pensions or wider financial planning. However, you can support with signposting people to appropriate services and encourage organisations making redundancies to do the same. The resources section below includes links to a redundancy pay calculator and to the GOV.UK overview of benefits that may be suitable. As a minimum after being made redundant, people will need to check that they’ve received all payments they are due and entitled to. This could include:

- Final pay, including any outstanding bonuses
- Redundancy payments
- Holiday pay
- Pay in lieu
- Expenses / commission owed

People over 50 may have assumed they would continue working at their current job until retirement. Many more will not have fully understood the amount of money needed to retire, or the impact of an increasing State Pension Age and the limited amount of money this may provide. As the cost of living rises for many, there may be increased pressure to find work quickly and more emotional stress. Many employers may provide mid-life MOTs which cover health, wealth and self – if these exist then encourage members to access these. If not, you can encourage organisations to provide this as part of their support package. It may not resolve people’s financial issues, but it will mean they have a true understanding of what is needed and this will influence their future planning.



8. Useful resources

Redundancy support

GOV.UK – Redundancy: your rights: Get help finding a new job - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/redundancy)

Acas - <https://www.acas.org.uk/redundancy>

Citizens Advice - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/redundancy>

Interactive guides for reps on redundancy - <https://www.tuc.org.uk/resource/redundancy-short-guides-reps>

Smart choices: preparing for the third age - <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/smart-choices-preparing-third-age>

Job Search

Restless - <https://restless.co.uk>

National Careers Service - <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk>

Careers can Change - <https://careerscanchange.co.uk>

Reskilling

FutureLearn – <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses>

BBC Bitesize – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

OpenLearn – <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses>

Alison – <https://alison.com/courses>

Online learning platforms – <https://www.learnmyway.com>

Further education courses and funding – <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses/financial-help>

Financial support

Redundancy Pay Calculator – <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/work/losing-your-job/redundancy-pay-calculator>

Group Coaching

Ageing Better’s Redundancy support project – [Redundancy support project | Centre for Ageing Better](#)

Insights from Ageing Better’s co-design – [Redundancy and retraining research](#)

All information and resources linked in this document are accurate at time of publishing. To ensure that the most up to date information is shared with members, please visit GOV.UK - [Redundancy: your rights: Get help finding a new job - GOV.UK](#)

Let's take action today for all our tomorrows.
Let's make ageing better.

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The Centre for Ageing Better is pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone, including challenging ageism and building an Age-friendly Movement, creating Age-friendly Employment and Age-friendly Homes. It is a charitable foundation funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and part of the government's What Works Network.